

## THE CREATIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION OUTCOME STUDY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**ABSTRACT.** This report is a summary of the Outcome Study conducted at Deuel Vocational Institution between October 1999 and October 2001 of Creative Conflict Resolution; which is a three-day intensive group workshop designed to facilitate a reorientation of violent offenders toward a more nonviolent (and therefore less problematic) adjustment while in prison. The CCR workshops were designed and conducted by Gretchen Newby of the Friends Outside National Organization. Sixty-four known violent offenders were pre-tested, participated in the CCR workshop, then post-tested by rating their levels of agreement with twenty violent opinion stems. A control group of thirty recovering alcoholics from the community provided a baseline of comparison. The resulting data were tested using the Kruskal-Wallis test, and found to contain highly significant differences. Dunn's multiple comparison procedure showed that pretest ratings differed significantly from both post-test and control group ratings ( $p < 0.0001$ ), and the post-test and control group ratings did not differ significantly. Therefore this study concluded that the CCR workshop was effective in facilitating a significant shift toward nonviolent attitudes in these sixty-four violent offenders.

### **THE NEED TO REDUCE VIOLENCE IN PRISON**

In California, with about 160,000 inmates in custody, there are over 75,000 who are violent. Add to these the men who are on parole and the number doubles. But these are abstract statements that mask the grim reality of the extent, impact, and cost of the violence these men commit. This report suggests that the violence potential of these men is a great threat to the citizens of California, and as well to peace officers both within the Department of Corrections and in communities throughout the state.

**The Outcome Study.** The motive to conduct this study arose from the need for better answers to various practical questions pertaining to violence in prison: What might reduce the frequency of violence in prison? Is there a way to identify who is able to become nonviolent? Can we predict who probably would resist efforts to become nonviolent? Are there procedures to promote nonviolence within prisons that are valid, humane, workable, cost-effective, attractive to inmates, and socially or politically acceptable? If we fail to facilitate a nonviolent adjustment for violent inmates, the cost will continue to be staggering,

### **WHAT ARE VIOLENT OFFENDERS LIKE?**

The men chosen to participate in this study were selected because they were known to be violent offenders. Fully 93 percent of the participants in this study were victims of child abuse before they were five years old, usually repeatedly. Expulsions from school for fighting were also quite common, as were commitments to Juvenile Hall facilities for other offenses as children.

The descriptions of what led these men to be violent identified the most frequent cause as *self-centered impulsivity*, most often facilitated by *alcohol and drug abuse*. The goals of their violence were (1) to get what they wanted without having to buy it or earn it, or (2) to "solve a problem" with the least possible effort.

### **ABOUT CREATIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Creative Conflict Resolution, as offered by the Friends Outside National Organization, was derived from the *Alternatives to Violence Project* (AVP). In 1975 a group of inmates at Greenhaven Prison in the New York State Prison system asked a local Quaker group for nonviolence training. The main goal was to attempt to reduce the level of violence in the prison environment. From the beginning at Greenhaven Prison, AVP spread to other prisons, both through Quaker meetings at those prisons and by word of mouth. The basic AVP Manual was produced as a resource to help volunteer facilitators offer AVP to an ever-widening circle of prisons.

Gretchen Newby, then a part-time volunteer with the Friends Outside National Organization in 1991, took training as a facilitator in AVP. She later adapted AVP for use within correctional settings in California. The Friends Outside version of AVP is called *Creative Conflict Resolution* (CCR). This is the program that was funded by a grant from the Hewlett Foundation to be offered in correctional settings in California.

At first, AVP consisted of materials adapted from the training of marshals during the civil rights peace marches of the 1960s and 70s, plus material from the Children's Creative Response to Conflict Program, and the Movement for a New Society. AVP was later incorporated as a private nonprofit educational corporation with ties to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), but is not a sectarian organization.

CCR adheres quite closely to the model described in AVP training manuals. CCR is usually a three-day intensive workshop in which each day is divided into sessions during the morning and afternoon. Each has an agenda that is posted and reviewed so that each participant always knows what is happening next. Each group is heterogeneous by design, including the most diverse ethnic/cultural/racial mix that is Achievable. These are men who most often would not mix with each other before the workshop.

Each session begins with the participants gathering into a circle of chairs, sitting "knee to knee." The facilitators, review the agenda and conduct a warm-up exercise to break the ice and set a mood.

The sessions then continue with a sequence of structured activities, insight-producing games, role plays, etc., that increase in intensity or complexity during the course of the Workshop. These are interspersed with various discussions, brainstorms, and self-disclosure exercises so that participants come to "own" the material presented. Each session then ends with an evaluation component and a closing. Detailed descriptions of every exercise are found in the *AVP Manual Basic Course* (1986) and the *AVP Manual Second Level Course* (1990).

### HOW DOES CCR WORK SO FAST?

The typical CCR workshop is a three-day intensive group experience. Violence-prone inmates develop their maladaptive traits of personality early in life, and have been persistently violent from the teen years onward. Yet dramatic shifts in attitude are seen to occur as a result of the three-day CCR workshop. It is fair to ask how a CCR workshop can facilitate such a large reorientation of attitudes in such a short time?

***Insufficient Social Learning Leads to Violence.*** Proneness to be violent is the result of a failure of social learning early in life. In order for social learning to occur, there must be interaction in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Parental caregivers, who are violent, manipulative, self-centered, impulsive, or otherwise immature, infuse these maladaptive traits into the social learning of their children. Specifically the child develops the following maladaptive traits:

- Self-centeredness - Does not see the viewpoint of others.
- Impulsivity - acts without thought of outcome to others.
- Poor Judgment - poor choices make problems for others.
- Low Frustration Tolerance - easily irritated and explosive.
- Lacks Integrity - denies responsibility by blaming others.

Such a person experiences many problems interacting with others, some of which may be costly. This person is impaired by an immature personality, but is not mentally disordered.

***Some Psychopaths Begin to Grow Again.*** Even among the more psychopathic violent offenders, some begin to grow again. A growing body of research is showing that between the ages of thirty and forty-five (with a modal age of about thirty-five), about half of these psychopathic offenders become dissatisfied with their life styles. They begin to see that nothing of enduring worth or significance in life will result from their self-centered orientation. They explain it thus:

***"If you keep doing what you have been doing,  
you keep getting what you have been getting."***

It is very difficult to refute this logic.

In an effort to rank-order violent offenders from prosocial to antisocial, I used ten case factors easily recorded from CDC Form 839 or 840 from the Central File of each inmate. These ten Case Factors are as follows:

#### Prosocial Factors

- Over 25 when convicted
- Has marital responsibilities
- High School grad or GED
- Employed or Self-Employed
- Honorable Military Service
- No Serious Rule Violations
- No History of Assault
- No Drug Trafficking
- No Weapons Possessed
- No Injury to Victims

#### Antisocial Factors

- Under 26 when convicted
- No marriage
- School Drop-out
- Not Employed
- No Military Service
- Serious Violations
- Has Assaulted
- Has Trafficked
- Possessed Weapons
- Caused Injury to Victims

The classification procedure of the Department of Corrections assigns to each inmate a classification score that sets the level of security needed for each inmate. The evaluator can easily rate the participant on each case factor from the CDC Form 839 or 840. The score was the sum of case factors, and could range from zero to ten.

**Antisocial versus Prosocial.** For convenience, let us refer to the first as *antisocial* violent offenders, and the second as *prosocial* violent offenders. Not all violent offenders fall conveniently into one of these types, but many do.

**The Nature of Mental Dissonance.** The mind is a structure made up of concepts. A concept is a mental rule that defines how experiences may be similar, and how they may differ from yet other experiences. At the innermost level of the mind are core concepts that define identity. These are of the form "I am \_\_\_\_ but I am not \_\_\_\_." For example, "I am nonviolent, but I am not weak." Other concepts help us to function effectively, but do not involve identity. For example, "These circles are both round, but that triangle is not round."

When we sense something, we try to find the concept that best explains it. If we are accurate our explanation works and is valid. But sometimes the experience we have does not fit our existing concepts. This disagreement between experience and concepts is called *dissonance*. We then need to learn a new concept that will reduce the dissonance. Dissonance causes us to change our minds to function more effectively. We do this by learning and refining concepts.

According to this model, the socially mature person is nonviolent because a hostile urge causes so much dissonance that violence is unthinkable. An antisocial person does not experience dissonance at the prospect of violence. The socially immature person acts out the hostile urge without adequate thought. Traditional models of counseling or psychotherapy approach dissonance reduction very slowly, and are neither reliable nor cost-beneficial. The CCR model creates dissonance in a socially immature participant, and then experientially guides him to a more mature resolution of the situation. This can happen in minutes. It is not dependent upon the amount of time available.

Therefore, by structuring a sequence of experiences that induce dissonance by eliciting violent impulses, and then guiding participants to reduce the dissonance by learning new nonviolent tactics, a powerful remedy is possible that enables sudden resolution of the dissonance, and reduction of the potential to be violent.

## MEASURES, METHODS, AND PROCEDURES

The most basic purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the Creative Conflict Resolution (CCR) workshops produce a significant shift in attitudes to a more nonviolent orientation. Therefore the experimental hypotheses may be formally stated as follows:

0. **Null Hypothesis:** *Participants in CCR will not experience a shift in attitudes toward nonviolence.*
1. **Experimental Hypothesis:** *Participants in CCR will experience a significant shift in attitudes toward nonviolence.*

**The Assessment of Statistical Significance and Power.** In this study the level of significance was set at 0.05, and the sample size was 64 pairs of pretest and post-test ratings. Therefore power exceeds 90 percent. In other words, there is less than a ten percent chance of failing to accept the experimental hypothesis when it is true in this study.

**Assessing Violent Attitudes.** In order to measure violent attitudes, I derived a set of twenty statements about violence, each of which could be rated by participants both before and after a workshop. I listed these rationalizations from remarks commonly made by violence-prone inmates I had interviewed over a period of several years.

A sample of the violent opinions are the following:

"Sometimes a man just has to fight."

"A prison is a very violent place."

"I have fought to protect my friends."

"A man gets beat up because he deserves it."

"A man who doesn't fight back is weak."

"I only fight when the other person starts it."

Rating the opinion stems used a Likert Scale as follows:

"I strongly disagree"	-2
"I disagree"	-1
"I have no opinion"	0
"I agree"	+1
"I strongly agree"	+2

The hypotheses were tested using the violent opinion stems and the Likert Scale. The Likert scale was assumed to have ordinal properties and the data collected was not assumed to have an underlying normal distribution. Therefore nonparametric statistics were used to perform the basic analyses.

**Participants.** We defined a population of violent inmates from Deuel Vocational Institution (DVI). This population was composed of 130 mainline male inmates who had engaged in violent rule violations during the first and second quarter of the current year (1999), and 39 male inmates who were convicted for violent offenses and subsequently sentenced to 25 years-to-life ("lifers").

**Lifers.** The Friends Outside Case Manager at DVI contacted twenty-seven of the lifers to recruit them as potential participants in the Outcome Study. These men volunteered to participate in the, first experimental CCR workshop within the prison, held in May 2000. These lifers were included because they were a known and stable group who had violent histories.

**Mainliners.** Twenty-four mainliners were randomly selected as participants. Two refused participation, and the remaining 22 were assigned to the second workshop, also held during May 2000. These inmates were screened to meet two criteria: (1) the crime for which they were convicted was a violent felony, and (2) they had been found guilty of a violent rule violation within the current year (2000). Another 15 mainline inmates were recruited for a third workshop scheduled to be conducted in the fall.

**Control Group.** Most of the participants had significant histories of alcohol and drug abuse. Therefore a control group who also had significant histories of alcohol and drug abuse seemed desirable. We recruited recovering alcoholics from a local community. None of these men had ever been incarcerated in a state or federal prison. These 30 men composed the control group to compare violence- proneness, as assessed in their ratings of violent attitudes. Thus a total of 94 men were the subjects of this study. Of them, 27 were lifers, 37 were mainline inmates, and 30 were recovering alcoholics from the community serving as a control group.

**Procedure.** The experimental design to evaluate the shift in attitude toward nonviolence was a *Mixed Two-Factor Within Subjects Design*. The comparison of pretest ratings with post-test ratings would reveal a shift, if any, attributable to the CCR workshop experience. Then, by comparing both of these sets of ratings with the Control Group set of ratings, we could assess both the significance and the direction of the shift, if there was one.

All participants completed their personal history forms, the ratings of violent opinion stems, and psychological testing with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Second Edition (MMPI-11).

During the weekend of May 26, 2000, I took personal history forms and violent opinion rating forms to the Tracy, California Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, and with their permission recruited thirty volunteers to serve as a control group. These men completed the personal history forms and rated the violent opinion stems, but did not complete the MMPI-11.

The third workshop was scheduled, for October 2000, but was cancelled because of an institutional lockdown. This workshop was rescheduled and conducted in early November 2000.

The workshops themselves were conducted by Gretchen Newby and Cora Harris of the Friends Outside National Organization.

## FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The data analyzed for this study consisted of the pretest and post-test ratings of the twenty violent opinion stems by the 64 inmate participants in the CCR workshops, and the same ratings of the control group from the local community.

*Dunn's Multiple Comparison* test of the differences between the means of these data is shown below. Dunn's test was used following the overall analysis using the Kniskall- Wallis Test, which was found to be highly significant LU 96.349,  $df = 63$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ).

The results show a highly significant difference between the pretest and post-test ratings of violent inmates (mean rank difference = - 75.34,  $p < 0.0001$ , and the pretest of violent inmates with the control group (mean rank difference = -66.34,  $p < 0.0001$ ). In addition, the comparison of post- test ratings of violent inmates with the control group showed no significant difference (mean rank difference = 9.09, not significant).

The experimental hypothesis was therefore accepted. Inmates who participated in the CCR workshops did experience a highly significant shift in their ratings of violent opinion stems. This shift appeared to be the result of the CCR workshop experience.

**Case Factors.** In an effort to reform the process by which participants were selected for inclusion in CCR workshops, I selected the ten case factors shown above. I correlated the scores for the violent inmates with their attitude shifts shown from pretest versus post-test ratings. I predicted that lower case factor scores would correlate with more shift of attitude toward nonviolence.

I tested this hypothesis using the Spearman Rank Correlation, which makes no assumptions about the underlying distribution of the data. This test was highly significant (Spearman  $r = -0.803$ ,  $n = 64$  pairs,  $p <$

0.0001). Therefore, as the number of antisocial case factors decreased, the amount of attitude shift towards nonviolence increased. Nearly two-thirds of the possible variability is accounted for in this correlation. This procedure is reliable, internally consistent, and appears valid. Since each inmate is scored on CDC Form 839 when received into the Department of Corrections, this is a reliable and valid basis to assess antisociality.

## HOW TO REDUCE VIOLENCE IN PRISONS

The findings from the experimental study of CCR workshops reported above have shown CCR workshops to be a reliable and valid remedial intervention for some violent offenders. The violent offenders most influenced toward nonviolence as a result of CCR workshops are the less diagnosable antisocial offenders.

***Reducing Violence in Prison.*** Suppose a prison had regularly recurrent CCR workshops, the goal of which was to teach inmates alternatives to violence, and to commit them to nonviolence. Any correctional or free staff could refer an inmate for inclusion in such a CCR workshop. Inmates could also refer themselves.

Hearing Officers could consider the CCR workshops as a disposition for rule violations, and could consider completion of CCR when adjudicating rule violations in the future. For example, if both parties to a mutual combat were willing to participate in the same CCR workshop as an alternative disposition to mutual combat, then the Hearing Officer could so recommend.

***Dissonance Reduction Can Lead to Violence Reduction.*** The ability of the CCR workshop to produce the shift in attitudes toward nonviolence so quickly is unremarkable when explained as an instance of the induction and reduction of cognitive dissonance.

The dissonance model does not depend upon voluntary self-selection of participants. According to dissonance theory, the fact of participation in the intervention activity is essential, but the level of willingness of the participant is not vital to the effect. A reluctant participant experiences dissonance reduction just as does a willing participant. This feature of the dissonance model is particularly apt for application in the Department of Corrections.

Yet further appeal of the dissonance model derives from the finding that there is no great subjective emotional distress that attends dissonance induction and reduction. In this respect, dissonance should not be confused with fear, anxiety, or apprehension. Dissonance induction and reduction involve the realignment of mental concepts, but may not involve significant subjective distress.

***Important limitations.*** The CCR workshops will not produce a shift of attitude toward nonviolence in every instance, though they will produce such a shift in 35 to 45 percent of the participants. We do know that more psychopathic participants do not show as much shift in attitude toward nonviolence as do less psychopathic participants. This does not refer to the level of violence seen in the participants' histories, but rather to the specific maladaptive traits of personality that explain violence proneness.

We do not yet know how long the effect of shifted attitudes will last. It is possible that an inmate who participated in CCR workshops may need a "tune up" periodically. This issue has not yet been studied.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

***Recommendation 1 - Standardize the Workshop.*** The set of exercises that compose the CCR Workshop should be standard.

***Recommendation 2 - Use a Syllabus Outline During Sessions.*** The use of a syllabus outline would help the group to stay on task, and would further aid both standardization and evaluation of agenda exercises.

***Recommendation 3 - Broaden the Correctional Settings.*** By broadening the correctional settings and gathering the evaluative data, it would become possible to evaluate how robust is CCR in different inmate populations. For example, inclusion of women's facilities, substance abuse settings, etc.

***Recommendation 4 - Build a Program Evaluation Module as a Standard Component of the CCR Workshop.*** A procedure to gather data to determine accessibility, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the CCR Workshops should be a routine program component. This should include a reporting procedure to disseminate information throughout CDC using existing media where possible.